

**STATE V. GARY LEON RIDGWAY**

**DECEMBER 18, 2003 SENTENCING**

**STATEMENT TO RIDGWAY**

MR. RIDGWAY, THE TIME HAS NOW COME FOR THE FINAL CHAPTER OF YOUR REIGN OF TERROR IN THIS COMMUNITY.

TODAY HAS BEEN A LONG TIME COMING FOR THE BRUTAL MURDERS YOU COMMITTED.

AN ENGLISH POET, JOHN DRYDEN, [*THE COCK AND THE FOX*] ONCE WROTE:

**“MURDER MAY PASS UNPUNISH’D FOR A TIME,  
BUT TARDY JUSTICE WILL O’ERTAKE THE CRIME”**

TODAY MR. RIDGWAY IS THE DAY OF JUSTICE FOR ALL OF THE YOUNG WOMEN YOU MURDERED. IT IS NOW TIME FOR OUR COMMUNITY TO HAVE PEACE FROM THE GREEN RIVER MURDERS.

NORMAL PROTOCOL WOULD DICTATE THAT I SENTENCE YOU AND THEN ADDRESS THE VICTIM FAMILY MEMBERS.

BUT I AM NOT GOING TO FOLLOW THAT PROCESS; I AM GOING TO ADDRESS THE VICTIM FAMILY MEMBERS FIRST. I DO

THIS OUT OF MY DEEP RESPECT FOR THE PAIN THEY HAVE  
ENDURED AND THE LOSS THEY HAVE EXPERIENCED.

TO THE VICTIM FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS, A  
SENTENCING OF THIS TYPE CAN SEEM QUITE IMPERSONAL. IF I  
HAD MY CHOICE, I'D SPEAK TO EACH FAMILY SEPARATELY,  
BUT UNDER THESE CIRCUMSTANCES I MUST SPEAK TO YOU AS  
A WHOLE.

AND BEFORE I BEGIN, I ASK FOR A MOMENT OF SILENCE IN  
THIS COURTROOM, THE CITY OF SEATTLE, ALL OF KING  
COUNTY AND OF EVERY PERSON ACROSS THE GLOBE TO WHOM  
THIS BROADCAST MAY REACH. I ASK FOR THIS MOMENT OF  
SILENCE IN HONOR OF ALL OF THE YOUNG WOMEN WHO WERE  
VICTIMS IN THIS CASE AND CANNOT SPEAK FOR THEMSELVES.

THANK YOU, YOUR SILENCE SPEAKS VOLUMES.

I WANT EACH FAMILY MEMBER AND FRIEND OF THE  
VICTIMS TO KNOW THAT I HAVE THOUGHT LONG AND HARD  
ABOUT THE WORDS I COULD SHARE WITH YOU AT THIS TIME.

I KNOW YOU HAVE PROBABLY BEEN TOLD BY SCORES OF  
PEOPLE THAT THIS SENTENCING WILL BRING CLOSURE.

TO SOME DEGREE THAT IS TRUE.

BUT, AS YOU WALK OUT OF THIS COURTROOM AT THE  
END OF THE DAY, AFTER MR. RIDGWAY IS SENTENCED AND  
GONE, I KNOW YOUR HEARTS WILL STILL BE HEAVY WITH  
SORROW.

I THINK JO LESLEY BEST SAID IT IN A LETTER FOR MS.  
CHILDRESS, THE VICTIM IN COUNT 16:

“THERE IS A HOLE IN MY HEART, A VACANCY THAT ONLY  
MY CHILD CAN OCCUPY, THE EMPTINES IS DEEP AND IT  
HURTS.”

JO LESLEY AND EVERY VICTIM FAMILY MEMBER, PLEASE  
KNOW, JUSTICE WILL BE SERVED TODAY.

FOR THE PAST 20 YEARS EACH OF THE YOUNG WOMEN  
WHO DIED HAS BEEN GROUPED, LABELED AND  
CHARACTERIZED AS IF THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THEIR DEATH  
WAS REPRESENTATIVE OF THEIR ENTIRE LIVES.

I ASK EVERY FAMILY MEMBER, FRIEND AND EVERY  
MEMBER OF OUR COMMUNITY TO IGNORE SUCH STIGMA.

I ASK YOU TO REMEMBER THOSE 48 YOUNG WOMEN AS  
PEOPLE WHO HAD UNEXPLORED DREAMS, HOPES, ASPIRATIONS

AND FAMILIES THAT LOVED THEM DEEPLY. HOLD ON TO  
THOSE MEMORIES. CHERISH THOSE MEMORIES AND TRY TO  
ABANDON THE OTHERS.

IF YOU HAVE MOMENTS OF GRIEF, I ENCOURAGE YOU NOT  
TO WASTE THOSE OCCASIONS ON THOUGHTS OF REVENGE,  
HATRED OR HARM TO MR. RIDGWAY. HATRED AND REVENGE  
ARE WASTED EMOTIONS. SOMEONE ONCE SAID THAT “HATRED  
IS LIKE BURNING DOWN YOUR OWN HOUSE TO GET RID OF A  
RAT.”

RATHER THAN DWELLING ON SUCH THOUGHTS, I  
ENCOURAGE YOU TO REMEMBER YOUR LOVED ONES IN OTHER  
WAYS. THERE ARE HUNDREDS OF YOUNG WOMEN RIGHT NOW  
IN OUR COMMUNITY THAT DON'T HAVE PEOPLE SUCH AS  
YOURSELVES IN THEIR LIVES.

FIND THEM. SEEK THEM OUT. KNOW THAT FOR EACH  
MINUTE YOU SPEND WITH THAT YOUNG WOMAN,  
ENCOURAGING THEM AND HELPING THEM TO ACHIEVE  
GREATNESS, YOU ARE PUTTING A SMILE ON THE FACE OF YOUR  
LOVED ONE. IN THIS WAY YOU GIVE THEIR LIFE TRUE  
MEANING AND DIGNITY.

I'LL CLOSE MY COMMENTS TO THE VICTIM FAMILY MEMBERS AND FRIENDS BY SHARING WITH YOU WORDS OF COMFORT FROM A SYMPATHY CARD THAT I RECEIVED WHEN I SUFFERED THE LOSS OF MY BROTHER:

“MAY THE LOVE OF YOUR GOD GIVE YOU PEACE,  
MAY THE LOVE OF FRIENDS GIVE YOU COMFORT,  
MAY THE LOVE OF YOUR DEAR ONE REMAIN IN YOUR  
HEART AND GIVE YOU STRENGTH THROUGH THE DIFFICULT  
DAYS AHEAD”

AND NOW MR. RIDGWAY YOU HAVE MY UNDIVIDED ATTENTION.

I HAVE READ AS MUCH AS POSSIBLE ABOUT YOU AS THIS CASE PROGRESSED. THE REMARKABLE THING ABOUT YOU IS YOUR TEFLON COATED EMOTIONS AND COMPLETE ABSENCE OF GENUINE COMPASSION FOR THE YOUNG WOMEN YOU MURDERED.

I DON'T NEED TO REMIND YOU OF THE CALLOUSED INDIFFERENCE YOU EXHIBITED IN YOUR LIFESTYLE FOR THE

PAST 20 YEARS OR EVEN IN THE STATEMENTS YOU PROVIDED TO THE PROSECUTORS AND INVESTIGATORS.

IN LOOKING AT YOUR LIFE, IT COMES AS NO SURPRISE THAT YOU HAD SUCH LITTLE DISREGARD FOR THE LIVES OF YOUR VICTIMS.

YOU VIOLATED THE SANCTITY OF EVERY RELATIONSHIP IN YOUR LIFE, INCLUDING YOUR OWN SON. WHEN HE WAS OF TENDER AGE YOU EVEN USED HIS EXISTENCE AND PRESENCE AS A MEANS TO GAIN THE CONFIDENCE OF YOUR VICTIMS.

THERE WAS NOTHING IN YOUR LIFE THAT WAS OF SIGNIFICANCE OTHER THAN YOUR OWN DEMENTED, CALCULATING, LUSTFUL PASSION OF BEING THE EMISSARY OF DEATH.

I MENTION YOUR FAMILY, MR. RIDGWAY, BECAUSE THEY TOO ARE INNOCENT VICTIMS. YOU USED THEM TO CREATE THE FAÇADE OF BEING AN AVERAGE HARD WORKING FAMILY MAN IN THE COMMUNITY. YOUR FAMILY SUPPORTED YOU AND BELIEVED IN YOU AND YOU DECEIVED THEM GREATLY.

MR. RIDGWAY I TRUST THAT YOUR LAWYERS HAVE  
SHARED WITH YOU THE LETTERS WRITTEN BY THE VICTIM  
FAMILIES.

I HOPE YOU READ THOSE LETTERS AND HEARD THE  
MESSAGE OF THEIR FAMILY AS THEY POURED OUT THEIR  
EMOTIONS DESCRIBING THE YOUNG VICTIMS AS REAL  
PERSONS. REAL PERSONS WHO WERE LOVED AND HAD LIVES  
IN FRONT OF THEM.

YES MR. RIDGWAY, REMEMBER THEM AS PORTRAYED BY  
THEIR FAMILIES AND NOT THE FACELESS BODIES THAT YOU  
DIDN'T HAVE THE COURAGE TO FACE WHEN YOUR WERE BUSY  
BRINGING ABOUT THEIR DEATHS.

THOSE ARE THE FAMILY AND FRIENDS OF THE PEOPLE  
YOU KILLED.

AS YOU SPEND THE BALANCE OF YOUR LIFE IN YOUR  
CELL IN PRISON, MUCH OF WHICH WILL PROBABLY BE IN  
SOLITARY CONFINEMENT, I TRULY HOPE THAT THE LAST  
THOUGHTS YOU HAVE OF THE FREE WORLD ARE THE FACES OF  
THE PEOPLE IN THIS COURTROOM.

AS YOU SPEND THE BALANCE OF YOUR LIFE IN THAT TINY CELL, SURROUNDED ONLY BY YOUR THOUGHTS, PLEASE KNOW THE WOMEN YOU KILLED WERE NOT THROW-AWAYS OR PIECES OF CANDY IN A DISH PLACED UPON THIS PLANET FOR THE SOLE PURPOSE OF SATISFYING YOUR MURDEROUS DESIRES.

WHILE YOU COULD NOT FACE THEM AS YOU TOOK THEIR LIVES, IF YOU HAVE A DROP OF EMOTION ANYWHERE IN YOUR EXISTENCE, YOU WILL FACE THOSE YOUNG WOMEN IN YOUR DREAMS AND PRIVATE THOUGHTS OF YOUR GRISSLY DEEDS. IF YOU HAVE THAT DROP OF EMOTION, YOU WILL BE HAUNTED FOR THE BALANCE OF YOUR LIFE.